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Campaign Document, No. 4½

WEST POINT ORATION,

BY

GEN. GEORGE B. McCLELLAN.

All nations have days sacred to the remembrance of joy and of grief. They have thanksgivings for success, fasting and prayers in the hour of humiliation and defeat, triumphs and pæans to greet the living laurel-crowned victor. They have obsequies and eulogies for the warrior slain on the field of battle. Such is the duty we are to perform to-day. The poetry, the histories, the orations of antiquity, all resound with the clang of arms; they dwell rather upon rough deeds of war, than the gentle arts of peace. They have preserved to us the names of heroes, and the memory of their deeds, even to this distant day. Our own Old Testament teems with the narrations of the brave actions and heroic deaths of Jewish patriots, while the New Testament of our meek and suffering Saviour, often selects the soldier and his weapons to typify and illustrate religious heroism and duty. These stories of the actions of the dead have frequently survived, in the lapse of ages, the names of those whose fall was thus commemorated centuries ago. But, although we know not now the names of all the brave men who fought and fell upon the plain of Marathon, in the pass of Thermopylæ, and on the hills of Palestine, we have not lost the memory of their examples. As long as the warm blood courses the veins of man, as long as the human heart beats high and quick at the recital of brave deeds and patriotic sacrifices, so long will the lesson still incite generous men to emulate the heroism of the past.

Among the Greeks, it was the custom that the fathers of the most valiant of the slain should pronounce the eulogies of the dead. Sometimes it devolved upon their great statesmen and orators to perform this mournful duty. Would that a new Demosthenes, or a second Pericles, could arise and take my place to-day, for he would find a theme worthy of his most brilliant powers, of his most touching eloquence. I stand here now, not as an orator, but as the whilom commander, and in the place of the fathers of the most valiant dead. As their comrade, too, on many a hard-fought field against domestic and foreign foe, — in early youth and mature manhood, — moved by all the love that David felt when he poured forth his lamentation for the mighty father and son who fell on Mount Gilboa. God knows that David's love for Jonathan was no more deep than mine for the tried friends of many long and eventful years, whose names are to be recorded upon the structure that is to rise upon this spot. Would that his more than mortal eloquence could grace my lips and do justice to the theme!

We have met to-day, my comrades, to do honor to our own dead; brothers united to us by the closest and dearest ties, who have freely given their lives for their country in this war — so just and righteous, so long as its purpose is to crush rebellion, and to save our nation from the infinite evils of dismemberment. Such an occasion as this should call forth the deepest and noblest emotions of our nature — pride, sorrow, and prayer; pride that our country has possessed such sons; sorrow that she has lost them; prayer

that she may have others like them; that we and our successors may adorn her annals as they have done, and that when our parting hour arrives, whenever and however it may be, our souls may be prepared for the great change.

We have assembled to consecrate a cenotaph, which shall remind our children's children, in the distant future, of their fathers' struggles in the days of the great rebellion. This monument is to perpetuate the memory of a portion only of those who have fallen for the nation in this unhappy war — it is dedicated to the officers and soldiers of the regular army. Yet this is done in no class or exclusive spirit, and in the act we remember with reverence and love our comrades of the volunteers, who have so gloriously fought and fallen by our sides. Each State will, no doubt, commemorate in some fitting way the services of its sons, who abandoned the avocations of peace and shed their blood in the ranks of the volunteers. How richly they have earned a nation's love, a nation's gratitude, with what heroism they have confronted death, have wrested victory from a stubborn foe, and have illustrated defeat, it well becomes me to say, for it has been my lot to command them on many a sanguinary field. I know that I but echo the feeling of the regulars, when I award the high credit they deserve to their brave brethren of the volunteers.

But we of the regular army have no States to look to for the honors due our dead. We belong to the whole country, and can neither expect nor desire the general government to to make, a perhaps invidious distinction in our favor. We are few in number, a small band of comrades, united by peculiar and very binding ties; for with many of us our friendships were commenced in boyhood, when we rested here in the shadow of the granite hills which look down upon us where we stand; with others the ties of brotherhood were formed in more mature years, while fighting among the rugged mountains and fertile valleys of Mexico — within hearing of the eternal waves of the Pacific, or in the lonely grandeur of the great plains of the far West. With all, our love and confidence have been cemented by common dangers and sufferings, on the toilsome march, in the dreary bivouac, and amid the clash of arms, and in the presence of death on scores of battle-fields. West Point, with her large heart, adopts us all — graduates and those appointed from civil life, officers and privates. In her eyes we are all her children, jealous of her fame, and eager to sustain her world-wide reputation. Generals and private soldiers, men who have cheerfully offered our all for our dear country, we stand here before this shrine, ever hereafter sacred to our dead, equals and brothers in the face of the common death which awaits us all, perhaps on the same field and at the same hour. Such are the ties which unite us, the most endearing which exist among men; such the relations which bind us together, the closest of the sacred brotherhood of arms.

It has therefore seemed, and it is fitting, that we should erect upon this spot, so sacred to us all, an enduring monument to our dear brothers who have preceded us on the path of peril and of honor, which it is the destiny of many of us to tread.

What is this regular army to which we belong?

Who are the men whose death merits such honors from the living?

What is the cause for which they have laid down their lives?

Our regular or permanent army is the nucleus which, in time of peace, preserves the military traditions of the nation, as well as the organization, science, and instruction indispensable to modern armies. It may be regarded as coeval with the nation. It derives its origin from the old continental and State lines of the Revolution, whence, with some interruptions and many changes, it has attained its present condition. In fact, we may with propriety go even beyond the Revolution to seek the roots of our genealogical tree in the old French wars, for the Cis-Atlantic campaigns of the seven years' war were not confined to the "red men scalping each other by the great lakes of North America," and it was in them that our ancestors first participated as Americans in the large operations of civilized armies. American regiments then fought on the banks of the St. Lawrence and the Ohio, on the shores of Ontario and Lake George, on the islands of the Caribbean and in South America. Louisburg, Quebec, Duquesne, the Moro, and Porto Bello attest the valor of the provincial troops, and in that school were educated such soldiers as Washington, Putnam, Lee, Montgomery, and Gates. These and men like Green, Knox, Wayne, and Steuben were the fathers of our permanent army, and under them our troops acquired that discipline and steadiness which enabled them to meet upon equal terms, and often to

defeat, the tried veterans of England. The study of the history of the Revolution, and a perusal of the despatches of Washington, will convince the most skeptical of the value of the permanent army in achieving our independence and establishing the civil edifice which we are now fighting to preserve.

The war of 1812 found the army on a footing far from adequate to the emergency, but it was rapidly increased, and of the new generation of soldiers many proved equal to the requirements of the occasion. Lundy's Lane, Chippewa, Queenstown, Plattsburgh, New Orleans — all bear witness to the gallantry of the regulars.

Then came an interval of more than thirty years of external peace, marked by many changes in the organization and strength of the regular army, and broken at times by tedious and bloody Indian wars. Of these the most remarkable were the Black Hawk war, in which our troops met unflinchingly a foe as relentless, and far more destructive than the Indians — that terrible scourge, the cholera; and the tedious Florida war, where for so many years the Seminoles eluded in their pestilential swamps our utmost efforts, and in which were displayed such traits of heroism as that commemorated by yonder monument to Dade and his command, "when all fell, save three, without an attempt to retreat." At last came the Mexican war, to replace Indian combats and the monotony of the frontier service, and for the first time in many years the mass of the regular army was concentrated, and took the principal part in the battles of that remarkable and romantic war. Palo Alto, Resaca, and Fort Brown, were the achievements of the regulars unaided, and as to the battles of Monterey, Buena Vista, Vera Cruz, Cerro Gorda, and the final triumphs in the valley, none can truly say that they could have been won without the regulars. When peace crowned our victories in the capital of the Montezumas, the army was at once dispersed over the long frontier, and engaged in harassing and dangerous wars with the Indians of the plains. Thus thirteen long years were spent, until the present war broke out, and the mass of the army was drawn in, to be employed against a domestic foe.

I cannot proceed to the events of the recent past and the present without adverting to the gallant men who were so long of our number, but who have now gone to their last home, for no small portion of the glory of which we boast was reflected from such men as Taylor, Worth, Brady, Brooks, Totten, and Duncan.

There is a sad story of Venetian history that has moved many a heart, and often employed the poet's pen and the painter's pencil. It is of an old man whose long life was gloriously spent in the service of the state as a warrior and a statesman, and who, when his hair was white and his feeble limbs could scarce carry his bent form toward the grave, attained the highest honors that a Venetian citizen could reach. He was Doge of Venice. Convicted of treason against the state, he not only lost his life, but suffered beside a penalty which will endure as long as the name of Venice is remembered. The spot where his portrait should have hung in the great hall of the doge's palace was veiled with black, and there still remains the frame, with its black mass of canvas — and this vacant frame is the most conspicuous of the long line of effigies of illustrious doges!

Oh! that such a pall as that which replaces the portrait of Marino Faliero could conceal from history the names of those, once our comrades, who are now in arms against the flag under which we fought side by side in years gone by. But no veil can cover the anguish that fills our hearts when we look back upon the sad memory of the past, and recall the affection and respect we entertained toward men against whom it is now our duty to act in mortal combat. Would that the courage, ability, and steadfastness they display had been employed in the defence of the "Stars and Stripes," against a foreign foe, rather than in this gratuitous and unjustifiable rebellion, which could not have been so long maintained but for the energy of these, our former comrades.

But we have reason to rejoice that upon this day, so sacred and so eventful for us, one grand old mortal monument of the past still lifts high his head among us, and graces by his presence the consecration of this tomb of his children. We may well be proud that we have been commanded by the hero who purchased victory with his blood near the great waters of Niagara, who repeated and eclipsed the achievements of Cortez; who, although a consummate and confident commander, ever preferred, when duty and honor would permit, the olive branch of peace to the blood-stained laurels of war, and who stands, at the close of a long, glorious, and eventful life, a living column of granite against which have beaten in vain alike the blandishments and the storms of treason. His name will ever be one of our proudest boasts and most moving inspirations. In long-distant ages, when this incipient monument has become ven-

erable, moss-clad, and perhaps ruinous, when the names inscribed upon it shall seem to those who pause to read them, indistinct mementoes of an almost mythical past, the name of Winfield Scott will still be clear cut upon the memory of all, like the still fresh carving upon the monuments of long-forgotten Pharaohs.

But it is time to approach the present.

In the war which now shakes the land to its foundation, the regular army has borne a most honorable part. Too few in numbers to act by themselves, regular regiments have participated in every great battle in the east, and in most of those west of the Alleghanies. Their terrible losses and diminished numbers prove that they have been in the thickest of the fight, and the testimony of their comrades and commanders show with what undaunted heroism they have upheld their ancient renown. Their vigorous charges have often won the day, and in defeat they have more than once saved the army from destruction or terrible losses by the obstinacy with which they resisted overpowering numbers. They can refer with pride to the part they played upon the glorious fields of Mexico, and exult at the recollection of what they did at Manassas, Gaines's Mill, Malvern Hill, Antietam, Shiloh, Stone River, Gettysburgh, and the great battles just fought from the Rapidan to the Chickahominy. They can also point to the officers who have risen among them and achieved great deeds for their country in this war; — to the living warriors whose names are on the nation's tongue and heart, too numerous to be repeated here, yet not one of whom I would willingly omit.

But perhaps the proudest episode in the history of the regular army is that touching instance of fidelity on the part of the non-commissioned officers and privates, who, treacherously made prisoners in Texas, resisted every temptation to violate their oath and desert their flag. Offered commissions in the rebel service, money and land freely tendered them, they all scorned the inducements held out to them, submitted to every hardship, and when at last exchanged, avenged themselves on the field of battle for the unavailing insult offered their integrity. History affords no brighter example of honor than that of these brave men, tempted, as I blush to say they were, by some of their former officers, who, having themselves proved false to their flag, endeavored to seduce the men who had often followed them in combat, and who had naturally regarded them with respect and love.

Such is the regular army; such its history and antecedents; such its officers and men. It needs no herald to trumpet forth its praises, it can proudly appeal to the numerous fields, from the tropics to the frozen banks of the St. Lawrence, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, fertilized by the blood and whitened by the bones of its members. But I will not pause to eulogize it. Let its deeds speak for it; they are more eloquent than tongue of mine.

Why are we here to-day?

This is not the funeral of one brave warrior, nor even of the harvest of death on a single battle-field, but these are the obsequies of the best and bravest of the children of the land, who have fallen in actions almost numberless, many of them among the most sanguinary and desperate of which history bears record. The men, whose names and deeds we now seek to perpetuate, rendering them the highest honor in our power, have fallen wherever armed rebellion showed its front — in far distant New Mexico, in the broad valley of the Mississippi, on the bloody hunting-grounds of Kentucky, in the mountains of Tennessee, amid the swamps of Carolina, on the fertile fields of Maryland, and in the blood-stained thickets of Virginia. They were of all grades — from the general officer to the private; of all ages — from the gray-haired veteran of fifty years' service to the beardless youth; of all degrees of cultivation — from the man of science to the uneducated boy. It is not necessary, nor is it possible, to repeat the mournful yet illustrious roll of dead heroes whom we have met to honor. Nor shall I attempt to name all of those who most merit praise — simply a few who will exemplify the classes to which they belong.

Among the last slain, but among the first in honor and reputation, was that hero of twenty battles — John Sedgwick — gentle and kind as a woman, brave as a brave man can be, honest, sincere, and able — he was a model that all may strive to imitate, but whom few can equal. In the terrible battles which just preceded his death, he had occasion to display the highest qualities of a commander and a soldier; yet after escaping the stroke of death when men fell around him by thousands, he at last met his fate at a moment of comparative quiet, by the ball of a single rifleman. He died as a soldier would choose to die — with truth in his heart, and a sweet, tranquil smile upon his face. Alas! our great nation possesses few sons like true John Sedgwick.

Like him fell, too, at the very head of their corps, the white-haired Mansfield, after a long career of usefulness, illustrated by his skill and cool courage at Fort Brown, Monterey, and Buena Vista — John F. Reynolds

and Reno, both in the full vigor of manhood and intellect — men who had proved their ability and chivalry on many a field in Mexico, and in this civil war, gallant gentlemen of whom their country had much to hope, had it pleased God to spare their lives. Lyon fell in the prime of life, leading his little army against superior numbers, his brief career affording a brilliant example of patriotism and ability. The impetuous Kearney, and such brave generals as Richardson, Williams, Terrill, Stevens, Weed, Strong, Saunders, and Hayes, lost their lifes while in the midst of a career of usefulness. Young Bayard, so like the most renowned of his name, that "knight above fear and above reproach," was cut off too early for his country, and that excellent staff-officer, Colonel Garesché fell while gallantly doing his duty.

No regiments can spare such gallant, devoted, and able commanders as Rossell, Davis, Gove, Simmons, Bailey, Putnam, and Kingsbury, — all of whom fell in the thickest of the combat, — some of them veterans, and others young in service, all good men and well-beloved.

Our batteries have partially paid their terrible debt to fate in the loss of such commanders as Greble, the first to fall in this war, Benson, Hazzard, Smead, De Hart, Hazlitt, and those gallant boys, Kirby, Woodruff, Dimmick, and Cushing; while the engineers lament the promising and gallant Wagner and Cross.

Beneath remote battle-fields rest the corpses of the heroic McRea, Reed, Bascom, Stone, Sweet, and many other company officers.

Besides these were hosts of veteran sergeants, corporals, and privates, who had fought under Scott in Mexico, or contended in many combats with the savages of the far West and Florida, and, mingled with them, young soldiers who, courageous, steady, and true, met death unflinchingly, without the hope of personal glory. These men, in their more humble sphere, served their conntry with as much faith and honor as the most illustrious generals, and all of them with perfect singleness of heart. Although their names may not live in history, their actions, loyalty, and courage, will. Their memories will long be preserved in their regiments, for there were many of them who merited as proud a distinction as that accorded to the "first grenadier of France," or to that other Russian soldier who gave his life for his comrades.

But there is another class of men who have gone from us since this war commenced, whose fate it was not to die in battle, but who are none the less entitled to be mentioned here. There was Sumner, a brave, honest, chivalrous, veteran, of more than half a century's service, who had confronted death unflinchingly on scores of battle-fields, had shown his gray head serene and cheerful, where death most revelled, who more than once told me that he believed and hoped that his long career would end amid the din of battle — he died at home from the effects of the hardships of his campaigns.

That most excellent soldier, the elegant C. F. Smith, whom many of us remember to have seen so often on this plain, with his superb bearing, escaped the bullet to fall a victim to the disease which have deprived the army of so many of its best soldiers.

John Bufford, cool and intrepid; Mitchell, eminent in science; Plummer, Palmer, and many other officers and men, lost their lives by sickness contracted in the field.

But I cannot close this long list of glorious martyrs without paying a sacred debt of official duty and personal friendship. There was one dead soldier who possessed peculiar claims upon my love and gratitude. He was an ardent patriot, an unselfish man, a true soldier, the *beau ideal* of a staff officer — he was my aid-de-camp, Colonel Colburn.

There is a lesson to be drawn from the death and services of these glorious men which we should read for the present and future benefit of the nation. War in these modern days is a science, and it should now be clear to the most prejudiced that for the organization and command of armies, and the high combinations of strategy, perfect familiarity with the theoretical science of war is requisite. To count upon success when the plans or exeeution of campaigns are intrusted to men who have no knowledge of war, is as idle as to expect the legal wisdom of a Story or a Kent from a skilful physician.

But what is the honorable and holy cause for which these men laid down their lives, and for which the nation still demands the sacrifice of the precious blood of so many of her children?

Soon after the close of the Revolutionary war, it was found that the confederacy, which had grown up during that memorable contest, was fast falling to pieces from its own weight. The central power was too weak; it could only recommend to the different States such measures as seemed best; and it possessed no real power to legislate, because it lacked the executive force to compel obedience to its laws. The national credit and self-respect

had disappeared, and it was feared by the friends of human liberty throughout the world that ours was but another, added to the long list of fruitless attempts at self-government. The nation was evidently upon the brink of ruin and dissolution, when, some eighty years ago, many of the wisest and most patriotic of the land met to seek a remedy for the great evils which threatened to destroy the work of the Revolution. Their sessions were long, and often stormy; for a time the most sanguine doubted the possibility of a successful termination to their labors. But from amidst the conflict of sectional interests, of party prejudices, and of personal selfishness, the spirit of wisdom and conciliation at length evoked the Constitution, under which we have lived so long.

It was not formed in a day, but was the result of patient labor, of lofty wisdom, and of the purest patriotism. It was at last adopted by the people of all the States, — although by some reluctantly, — not as being exactly what all desired, but as being the best possible under the circumstances. It was accepted as giving us a form of government under which the nation might live happily and prosper, so long as the people should continue to be influenced by the same sentiments which actuated those who formed it, and which would not be liable to destruction from internal causes, so long as the people preserved the recollection of the miseries and calamities which led to its adoption.

Under this beneficent Constitution the progress of the nation was unexampled in history. The rights and liberties of its citizens were secure at home and abroad; vast territories were rescued from the control of the savage and the wild beast, and added to the domain of civilization and the Union. The arts, the sciences, and commerce, grew apace; our flag floated upon every sea, and we took our place among the great nations of the earth.

But under the smooth surface of prosperity upon which we glided swiftly, with all sails set before the summer breeze, dangerous reefs were hidden which now and then caused ripples upon the surface, and made anxious the more cautious pilots, Elated by success, the ship swept on, the crew not heeding the warnings they received, forgetful of the dangers they escaped in the beginning of the voyage, and blind to the hideous maelstrom which gaped to receive and destroy them. The same elements of discordant sectional prejudices, interests, and institutions, which had rendered the formation of the Constitution so difficult, threatened more than once to destroy it. But for a long time the nation was so fortunate as to possess a series of political leaders who, to the highest abilities, united the same spirit of conciliation which animated the founders of the Republic, and thus for many years the threatened evils were averted. Time and long-continued good fortune obliterated the recollection of the calamities and wretchedness of the years preceding the adoption of the Constitution. Men forgot that conciliation, common interest, and mutual charity had been the foundation and must be the support of our government — as is indeed the case with all governments and all the relations of life. At length men appeared with whom sectional and personal prejudices and interests outweighed all considerations for the general good. Extremists of one section furnished the occasion, eagerly seized as a pretext by equally extreme men in the other, for abandoning the pacific remedies and protection afforded by the Constitution, and seeking redress for possible future evils in war and the destruction of the Union.

Stripped of all sophistry and side issues, the direct cause of the war, as it presented itself to the honest and patriotic citizens of the North, was simply this: Certain States, or rather, a portion of the inhabitants of certain States, feared or professed to fear, that injury would result to their rights and property from the elevation of a particular party to power. Although the Constitution and the actual condition of the government provided them with a peaceable and sure protection against the apprehended evil, they preferred to seek security in the destruction of the government, which could protect them, and in the use of force against the national troops holding a national fortress.

To efface the insult offered our flag, to save ourselves from the fate of the divided republics of Italy and South America; to preserve our government from destruction; to enforce its just power and laws; to maintain our very existence as a nation — these were the causes that impelled us to draw the sword.

Rebellion against a government like ours, which contains within itself the means of self-adjustment, and a pacific remedy for evils, should never be confounded with a revolution against despotic power, which refuses redress of wrongs. Such a rebellion cannot be justified upon ethical grounds, and the only alternative for our choice are its suppression, or the destruction of our nationality. At

such a time as this, and in such a struggle, political partisanship should be merged in a true and brave patriotism, which thinks only of the good of the whole country.

It was in this cause and with these motives, that so many of our comrades gave their lives, and to this we are all personally pledged in all honor and fidelity. Shall such devotion as that of our dead comrades, be of no avail? Shall it be said, in after ages, that we lacked the vigor to complete the work thus begun? that, after all these noble lives freely given, we hesitated, and failed to keep straight on until our land was saved? Forbid it, Heaven, and give us firmer, truer hearts than that!

Oh, spirits of the valiant dead, souls of our slain heroes, lend us your own indomitable will, and if it be permitted you to commune with those still chained by the trammels of mortality, hover around us in the midst of danger and tribulation, cheer the firm, strengthen the weak, that none may doubt the salvation of the republic, and the triumph of our grand old flag!

In the midst of the storms which toss our ship of state, there is one great beacon light, to which we can ever turn with confidence and hope. It cannot be that this great nation has played its part in history; it cannot be that our sun, which arose with such bright promises for the future, has already set forever. It must be the intention of the overruling Deity that this land, so long the asylum of the oppressed, the refuge of civil and religious liberty, shall again stand forth in bright relief, united, purified, and chastened by our trials, as an example and encouragement for those who desire the progress of the human race. It is not given to our weak intellects to understand the steps of Providence as they occur; we comprehend them only as we look down upon them in the far distant past.

So is it now.

We cannot unravel the seemingly tangled skein of the purposes of the Creator — they are too high and far-reaching for our limited minds. But all history and His own revealed Word teach us that His ways, although inscrutable, are ever righteous. Let us then honestly and manfully act our part, seek to understand and perform our whole duty, and trust unwaveringly in the beneficence of the God who led our ancestors across the sea, and sustained them afterward, amid dangers more appalling even than those encountered by His own chosen people in their great exodus. He did not bring us here in vain, nor has he supported us thus far for naught. If we do our duty and trust in Him, He will not desert us in our need.

Firm in our faith that God will save our country, we now dedicate this site to the memory of brave men, to loyalty, patriotism, and honor.

GENERAL McCLELLAN'S LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE.

ORANGE, NEW JERSEY,
September 8, 1864.

GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter informing me of my nomination by the Democratic National Convention, recently assembled at Chicago, as their candidate at the next election for President of the United States.

It is unnecessary for me to say to you that this nomination comes to me unsought.

I am happy to know that when the nomination was made the record of my public life was kept in view.

The effect of long and varied service in the army during war and peace, has been to strengthen and make indelible in my mind and heart the love and reverence for the Union, Constitution, laws, and flag of our country, impressed upon me in early youth.

These feelings have thus far guided the course of my life, and must continue to do so to its end.

The existence of more than one government over the region which once owned our flag is incompatible with the peace, the power, and the happiness of the people.

The preservation of our Union was the sole avowed object for which the war was commenced. It should have been conducted for that object only, and in accordance with those principles which I took occasion to declare when in active service.

Thus conducted, the work of reconciliation would have been easy, and we might have reaped the benefits of our many victories on land and sea.

The Union was originally formed by the exercise of a spirit of conciliation and compromise. To restore and preserve it, the same spirit must prevail in our councils, and in the hearts of the people.

The reëstablishment of the Union in all its integrity is, and must continue to be, the indispensable condition in any settlement. So soon as it is clear, or even probable, that our present adversaries are ready for peace, upon the basis of the Union, we should exhaust all the resources of statesmanship practised by civilized nations, and taught by the traditions of the American people, consistent with the honor and interests of the country, to secure such peace, reëstablish the Union, and guarantee for the future the constitutional rights of every State. The Union is the one condition of peace — we ask no more.

Let me add what, I doubt not was, although unexpressed, the sentiment of the Convention, as it is of the people they represent, that when any one State is willing to return to the Union, it should be received at once, with a full guarantee of all its constitutional rights.

If a frank, earnest, and persistent effort to obtain those objects should fail, the responsibility for ulterior consequences will fall upon those who remain in arms against the Union. But the Union must be preserved at all hazards.

I could not look in the face of my gallant comrades of the army and navy, who have survived so many bloody battles, and tell them that their labors and the sacrifice of so many of our slain and wounded brethren had been in vain; that we had abandoned that Union for which we have so often periled our lives.

A vast majority of our people, whether in the army and navy or at home, would, as I would, hail with unbounded joy the permanent restoration of peace, on the basis of the Union under the Constitution, without the effusion of another drop of blood. But no peace can be permanent without Union.

As to the other subjects presented in the resolutions of the Convention, I need only say that I should seek, in the Constitution of the United States and the laws framed in accordance therewith, the rule of my duty, and the limitations of executive power; endeavor to restore economy in public expenditure, reëstablish the supremacy of law, and, by the operation of a more vigorous nationality, resume our commanding position among the nations of the earth.

The condition of our finances, the depreciation of the paper money, and the burdens thereby imposed on labor and capital, show the necessity of a return to a sound financial system; while the rights of citizens, and the rights of States, and the binding authority of law over President, army, and people, are subjects of not less vital importance in war than in peace.

Believing that the views here expressed are those of the Convention and the people you represent, I accept the nomination.

I realize the weight of the responsibility to be borne should the people ratify your choice.

Conscious of my own weakness, I can only seek fervently the guidance of the Ruler of the universe, and, relying on His all-powerful aid, do my best to restore union and peace to a suffering people, and to establish and guard their liberties and rights,

I am, gentlemen,
very respectfully,
your obedient servant,

GEO. B. McCLELLAN.

Hon. HORATIO SEYMOUR,
and others, Committee.

REPUBLICAN PLATFORM.

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
WASHINGTON, July 18, 1864.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Any proposition which embraces the restoration of peace, the integrity of the whole Union, *and the abandonment of slavery, and which comes by and with an authority that can control the armies now at war against the United States, will be received and considered by the Executive Government of the United States,* and will be met by liberal terms on other substantial and collateral points, and the bearer or bearers thereof shall have safe conduct both ways.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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